



Mañjuśrī Initiation: Dharma Advice Before and After

His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche



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By the merit of this work, may Their Holiness the Sakya Trichen, the 42nd, and the 43rd Sakya Trizins enjoy perfect health and very long lives, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.



What is the true definition of wisdom?
Does receiving empowerment from
Mañjuśrī instantly bestow wisdom
upon us?

Why did the Buddha stress the importance
of introspection over seeking external
pursuits or getting entangled in conflicts
with others?

Why is Buddhism often described as a way of life?

How can we practically incorporate the timeless teachings of Buddha into our
daily lives?

This teaching is like a powerful bulldozer, clearing obstacles on our path,
enabling us to gain a clearer understanding of the genuine essence and proper
approach to Buddhist practice.



Mañjuśrī Initiation: Dharma Advice Before and After

Mañjuśrī is the embodiment of all the Buddha’s wisdom. By doing the practice of Mañjuśrī, you will gain more wisdom, and it will be easier for you to understand the Buddha’s teaching. But we should be clear what we mean when we say “wisdom.” What kind of wisdom are we seeking? In one sense, any type of knowledge in this world can be considered a kind of wisdom, whether it is knowledge of cooking or some other knowledge. But “wisdom” in the Buddhist sense is much higher than this.

Here at Casa Virupa, most of our students are very young—something encouraging to see, by the way. I think it is important for these students to understand the reasons for their practices. I’m sure that most of the young people here already know that the goal is to be enlightened, and they know that they need to behave, to be good, or to practice virtue. However, it is important to understand things at a deeper level than this. For one thing, we need to understand how our emotions—

especially desire, anger, and ignorance—cause all of the suffering that we experience. Talking to a lama yesterday, I learned that there are students here at the very beginning stage and others who have studied for many years. I think that, for the latter, it can be useful to be reminded about what they already know about karma, about negative and positive deeds.

In Buddhism, we believe that all suffering is caused by our own emotions, and we believe that there is a way out of this suffering. We also believe in rebirth. This saṃsāra into which we have been born is like a wheel—the wheel of existence. We are born, we grow old, we become sick, we die, and we are reborn again. This process goes on and on, with no end. Of course, not everybody who is born will grow old; some people die young. The point is that the processes of birth, sickness, old age, and death are the circle of life. The way out of this circle—the way out of saṃsāra—is through understanding and awakening.

We need to understand that the reason we suffer is because of the negative emotions of our own minds and our own negative deeds. We experience the suffering of saṃsāra because of our anger, desire, and ignorance. Ignorance drives both *anger* towards others and *desire* regarding ourselves and our loved ones. These emotions are the main reason we are trapped in saṃsāra.

These three—anger, desire, and ignorance—arise because we have *hope* and *doubt*. If you examine them, you will notice that both hope and doubt are in the future. If you have hope, it means you are thinking of something that might happen but hasn't happened yet. Doubt is the same. If you doubt something, you are unsure, you are worried about something that could happen. Because we experience doubt and hope, we have anger, desire, and ignorance.

These three negative emotions produce the ten negative deeds: three physical deeds, four verbal deeds, and three mental deeds.

The three negative deeds done with the physical body are:

1. Killing, whether a human or an animal
2. Stealing that which doesn't belong to you
3. Sexual misconduct

The four negative verbal deeds are:

1. Lying, which is saying, with the intention to deceive, that something happened when it did not happen or saying that something did not happen when it did.

2. Divisive speech, which creates trouble or disharmony, whether with a spouse, a sibling, in some other family situation, or in one's community, society, or country. If you create arguments or you cause some to dislike others, then you are causing division.
3. Harsh speech, which includes scolding, name-calling, and other speech made with the intention of hurting somebody.
4. Idle gossip, which includes talking idly about war and other negative or unpleasant things. As practitioners, we should not talk idly about wars or about other people's issues or suffering or other negative things because this increases anger. We should also not engage in idle gossip that increases desire, such as men talking about women or women talking about men.

The three mental negative deeds are:

1. Covetousness, which means wanting something that doesn't belong to you, whether it is a house, a car, or any other thing that isn't yours.
2. Ill will, which means to wish bad things on someone, such as wishing that they will break a leg, lose their

business, die, and so on.

3. Wrong views. This includes not believing in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, and especially not believing in the Buddha's words.

How can someone overcome these ten negative deeds? They are overcome through wisdom. Conversely, if we lack wisdom, we will not be able to escape them.

We tend to think that we are in control of ourselves, that we are stable and not crazy. You may think this about yourself, but if you examine your mind carefully, you will find that most of the things you do are caused by your anger or your desire, not because you are in control: you smile at something or somebody because you like it, or you dislike it and so you respond with aversion. These reactions and emotions create all our thoughts. Likewise, our minds are full of thoughts that never cease. We recognize a limited number of things that enter into our awareness. Right now, for example: you are listening to me, and you may be thinking, 'Oh, yes, this is nice, this is true.' However, at the same time there is also the noise generated by the ceiling fan. You might notice it briefly and think, 'Ah, there is a fan there!' Many things are running through our minds, even if we are not necessarily aware of them or focused on them.

If you think that you are in control of your mind, you can check

something for yourself. Right now, it is 11:54 in the morning. Is anyone about to tell me what they will be thinking at precisely two o'clock this afternoon? Or maybe in a week's time—it doesn't matter. If you are able to tell me what thought will be going through your mind at two o'clock, then I would say that you are in control of yourself, or in control of your mind. But if you do not know the answer and you cannot tell me, then I have to say that you are not in control of yourself and your mind. Maybe you will be noticing a flower or looking at some food or thinking about restaurants. All kinds of things might be happening in your mind. We cannot really know what feelings will happen to us.

Whatever happens in saṃsāra is experienced through our minds—how we think and how we feel. Everything arises due to our minds. This is the reason the Buddha's teachings are all about mental control, or mind training. In order to have control over your mind, you must understand your mind first. Before you can begin to train it, you have to see how it works. It's the same in any situation: If you want to solve a problem, then you need to understand it first, to identify it and understand it.

All of the Buddha's teachings are methods to reach a goal, whether it is your sadhana, a ritual, or an initiation like today's. We say that our goal is to be enlightened, or to

attain buddhahood, and so on. The bottom line when we say these phrases is that we want to be awakened, to acquire understanding, knowledge, or wisdom. This is our goal. Once we have acquired some of this, even in a general way, our minds will become more stable. We will not be so excited, sad or happy, but will experience more stability.

Imagine you are watching a movie that you have never seen before. Because you don't already know the story, you will laugh at the funny parts and cry at the sad parts. You will experience all kinds of different emotions. However, if you watch the same movie a second, third, or fourth time, you will not become so excited. Once you are familiar with it, you will just be watching it. Basically, this is how it is when you come to understand your mind.

The way to understand the external world is to understand yourself. Understand your mind, and you will understand everything. You will be able to remain more stable. Even in this room of twenty or thirty people, if I were to try to understand each one of you, it would take me a long time. I don't know how many years. But if I tried to understand myself instead, this would be easier. If someone tries to subdue the entire external world that bothers them, this would be difficult. But if that person subdued his or her own mind instead, then they will have succeeded in something just as good, the same as

subduing the whole world.

If I am happy, the world is a happy place. If I am sad, the world is a sad place. Likewise, when someone is happy, the people around them will be happy. You can see this work with your friends. If one of your friends is sad, then the others will share that emotion and become less happy. We sense other people's feelings, and we participate in them. In the past, when I gave talks to the Tibetan and Himalayan community, I would tell them things as a group: "You should be nice to each other; you should be thinking about society; you should do this or that as a *group*." But then, I realized it is very difficult to think like a group. We are all individuals. If you go to a mall with your family, for example, the children will want to go to a play area, your wife will want to go into stores that you don't want to go into, and so on. Everybody wants different things. If you decide to eat, someone will want Italian food, someone else will want burgers. It is very difficult to control our minds to be in sync with a society, even in a small family. How much more difficult to do this at the level of a larger society.

I think that, at the level of a monastery, or Casa Virupa, for example, if everybody just does their best and tries to behave within their own limits, this will be an easier goal. If you tell people to think about society, well, we never know how other people are thinking, or what is in their minds, or what they

might want, so it will be very difficult.

For this reason, I cannot stress enough the importance of minding how your *own* mind is behaving. When you are angry, you should always try to find out why you are angry. Suppose somebody says something that angers you; maybe when you examine it, you cannot find a good reason for being angry. This is one way to overcome your anger. Thinking about and examining small emotional responses like this, here and there, looks like a short-term solution at the small scale. However, we must work at this level. We train this way towards the goal of learning to maintain a stable and calm mind for longer and longer durations. This is how our practice works.

Every practice, every sadhana, every ritual, starts with me and the world. Some of us do sadhanas and others do not—your children, for example, do not do sadhanas. However, they say prayers. Whenever we do our practices, we need to remember that we are doing them for the sake of all sentient beings. This means every being in saṃsāra and not only humans, whether animals, hell beings, or gods. This is how all of our practices include me and the world.

It is important to understand that there is no world to be experienced without ‘me.’ This is why when you understand yourself, you can gain some control over yourself and, in this

way, over the whole world. The method side of Buddhist practice is based upon limitless loving-kindness and compassion. Without loving-kindness, you cannot think about compassion. Without compassion, you will not gain merit. Without merit, there is no enlightenment or awakening or buddhahood.

Today is the Mañjuśrī initiation. Mañjuśrī is a buddha who is the embodiment of all the wisdom of the buddhas, just as Avalokiteśvara is the embodiment of all the compassion of the buddhas, and Vajrapāṇi is the embodiment of all the power of the buddhas. Wisdom is necessary because without it you cannot learn or understand anything, and if you cannot gain understanding, you will not be able to do anything. This is very important, because the basis of the buddha's teaching is the practice of compassion, as I just explained.

I just told you about the ten negative deeds and why we are committing sins on the basis of the negative emotions. If we understand this, we will understand why we do these things again and again, making mistakes, and remaining in saṃsāra. We all know that smoking is not good for us, and yet some of us smoke. We all know that drinking is not good for us, and yet some of us drink. We all know that driving over the speed limit is dangerous, but sometimes we do it anyway.

You can see from this that merely knowing that something is right or wrong is not enough. We need to train and to practice in order to change ourselves. With practice, it will be easier to control our minds and keep our emotions stable. It is just like a chef who needs practice in order to be a cook, or an athlete who needs training in order to be an athlete. Whatever it is in this world that someone wants to achieve, they need to practice. To attain enlightenment, it is the same.

You need to train in compassion towards little things. If you see something in the news or something on the street, such as animals fighting with each other or people arguing, or if you see somebody who is in pain, you should generate compassion towards them. Think that you feel sorry for them. Or, you can say a mantra. If you do not say a mantra, just think with compassion, “I wish that they do not fight,” or “I wish that this animal or person, who is in pain, will be free from pain.”

This is easier to do when you yourself are not in pain. If you can train in compassion like this—or get used to compassion, which is a more appropriate word—while you are not suffering, then, when you encounter suffering, it will be easier to control your mind at that time. Whenever somebody is behaving in a harmful way towards you, you can overcome the situation by thinking with compassion that the other person is committing sin,

performing a negative deed. You should think, “I feel sorry for this person who will commit so many negative deeds because of their anger.” This is how we can overcome the difficulty.

The second thing you can do is to try to understand the situation. The more you understand the situation, the less emotional reaction you will have. For example, if somebody is calling you a ‘chicken’ or a ‘dog,’ your first reaction will be to get angry. But if you think carefully that no matter how many times the person calls you a ‘chicken’ or a ‘dog,’ it will not turn you into a chicken or a dog. You can practice understanding that they are angry simply because they are thoroughly controlled by their negative emotions.

If you can think ahead and train your mind during times when nobody is screaming at you, then, when somebody does scream at you, it will be much easier to handle the situation. This is actually how they train in customer service call centers. Many people call because they are angry. Not all of them yell, of course, but some of them do. The people who work in the call centers train their minds to think about something funny when this happens. This is how they handle it without becoming angry; they cannot yell back at the customers. We should do like this, because becoming angry and retaliating is a bad thing for us.

We must not forget that all the buddhas and deities like Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Vajrapāṇi are there to guide us, to show us the path. However, they are not able to take us to buddhahood or simply make us enlightened. From what many people tell me about their practice, I get the sense that they think that simply doing the sadhana or a retreat will cause Mañjuśrī to appear to them one day, and then they will be enlightened. That is not the way it works. Mañjuśrī will bless you, but he cannot make you enlightened. That is something you have to do for yourself. Nobody else can make you enlightened or awakened.

When people tell me that one day they hope Mañjuśrī will come to them and they will see Mañjuśrī, it is obvious that they have strong faith; they believe in Mañjuśrī one hundred percent. There is no question about that. But I also sense in this attitude a lack of confidence or belief in themselves. People are asking somebody else to believe in them when they don't believe in themselves. Of course, when I ask my brothers and sisters to believe in themselves this way, it is important for them not to go overboard. You should not think that you are powerful or important because your teacher said to you, "You must believe in yourself." You need to know your limits.

Believe in yourself and believe in the teachings. The sadhana that you do, the mantra that you chant, the practices that you do, the retreats, the rituals—all of these things should have meaning for you as a religious practitioner. I feel that people think too much that they are just simple, ordinary people, and what they do doesn't really matter. This is where I believe many practitioners need to have more belief in themselves, more confidence. As I said in the beginning, everything is about your mind—how you think and how you behave. Those who have received teachings a hundred times have heard a hundred times that the most important part of the teaching is one's motivation. If the motivation is not there, if someone thinks, "My effort or my practice does not matter," then something is missing. This is what I believe.

For example, when you lose somebody you loved—whether your parents or a child or your pet or some other person—you will feel very sad, and you will cry. You will undergo all the things connected with mourning. But, when you eventually acknowledge and accept that they are gone, then you stop crying. You stop mourning. In the beginning, facing the loss, your mind cannot accept that they are gone, and so it hurts. This shows us the power of the mind and the importance of understanding your mind. And this is why it is important

to believe in the teachings. The more importance you give to the teachings, the more meaningful they become. The more meaningful to you they are, the more powerful they will become. And the more powerful, the more beneficial for everybody.

[Initiation]

This completes the initiation. Although it is completed, this is only the beginning of your practice. Think of it like this: If you wanted to go from here to Barcelona, you would need a vehicle. Well, now you have that vehicle. Receiving the blessing is not the end but the beginning. From here on, you must practice in order to reach awakening. In school, the purpose of receiving instruction is to learn something that you can use in your life, whether it is for your work or towards something else that you want to do. The purpose of going to school is not just for the sake of going to school. In the same way, the whole purpose of receiving the teachings of the Buddha is to practice them.

Having received this Mañjuśrī blessing, it doesn't mean that you cannot practice anything else. You can have many different

deity practices. You can have, for example, Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi, Avalokiteśvara, Guru Padmasambhava, and others. There are many deities, and you can practice all of them. But remember that the deities are there to bless you, to guide you, to motivate you to improve oneself.

Buddhism is basically a way of life. We do not learn the teachings just to think about them. We learn the practices to do them. We should always keep in mind that Buddhism is for everyday life, and the purpose of practicing Buddhism is to have a better life.

I don't need to say again that caring about loved ones—your neighbors, relatives, the people surrounding you wherever you go—and engaging them with love and compassion is very important. But I think that, at the same time, keeping a balance is also important. I think this is also an aspect of the Buddha's teaching. We must understand that too much of anything is not good for us. Too much medicine turns into a poison. If you try to practice too much too soon, you may not be able to digest it all. You may not be able to practice like that. Trying to perform too much love, too much caring, too much of other practices is not advisable. It is just like too much eating, or too much sleeping or running. Whether it is your work, your practice, your family,

you need to keep a balance. This will make it sustainable for the long run, and you will be happier.

You should treat others with respect. I've been asked before, "How can I live with other people, especially with non-Buddhists?" I think the answer is respect. If you have respect for them, you can live with Buddhists or non-Buddhists among your family, friends, in society, and everywhere else. You should have respect for every person's religion. Whatever they believe, it is their choice. You have your choice, and they have theirs. Remember that just as you want happiness and peace for yourself, so does everyone else. We all want the same thing and are seeking the same thing.

We are students of His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trichen. He always said that every religion has its own beauty. He emphasized that every religion talks about compassion, love, and respect. We should not look down on others, thinking that our religion is the best. We have to understand that this very feeling that "Buddhism is the best" already means that ego is coming into play. Furthermore, if you cannot respect other people, then there is no reason for other people to respect you.

If we do these two things—maintain balance and have respect towards other people with loving-kindness and compassion—

then I believe that we will be able to achieve happier lives and healthier relationships. If you have good relationships with everyone, you can go anywhere you want. If you have bad relationships with some people, then you cannot. You won't go to certain areas or places, and there will be more problems. If you think that you want happiness in life just like others do, this is good. But if you think with negative judgment, "Okay, I like apples. Why doesn't this person also like apples?", then you are not respecting the other person and his or her choice. The other person can like strawberries or chocolate or whatever. Try to respect others and find balance. Living as community, as a family, as a society, will be easier that way. It will be much better.

Not everything goes according to our plans and expectations. You should keep certain standards in your mind, but then you will have to adjust your plan of action according to the individual, the group, or society. You cannot go everywhere with the exact same mindset.

Lastly, I would like to add one more thing. You may be thinking that all the things I have just said sound very good and very reasonable, but you must also *believe* them. You may think that this teacher is wise and perfect, that he says all these good things, and so he must float in the air. Well, I am also a

practitioner; I am also trying. When I undergo emotions, I also try to think about them and about what I am feeling and about what my guru said. I'm also a beginning practitioner, and it is a long process. It is important to understand this. I'm not saying that I have reached a great level, nothing like that. But I believe you have to make the teachings your own, according to your own tastes and proclivities. When you cook something, of course you should make it according to your own taste—the levels of salt, oil, and flavor. You should not make it sweet, for example, just because somebody else likes it sweet. It doesn't work like that.

We all want to live in a perfect world, but a perfect world does not exist. There is a story about Śiva and Pārvatī. Śiva is a Hindu God. According to Hinduism, the whole world was created by Śiva. His wife Pārvatī, looking upon all the problems in the world—rich and poor, wars, and all kinds of suffering—asked her husband, “If you created the world, why didn't you create it to be a perfect world where everybody is happy?” Śiva said to her, “Okay, let us go down into the world and we will see.” Riding a buffalo, they went down to the world. As they walked about with their buffalo, they met some people who criticized them, saying, “Such a stupid couple! They have a buffalo but they are not riding it.” Śiva said “Okay. Good, good. I will ride

the buffalo.” They continued on their way, and they met other people who said, “What a cruel husband! He is riding on the buffalo, and his wife is walking on the ground.” Śiva said, “Okay, a good idea.” Then he brought his wife Pārvatī with him up onto the buffalo. They continued, and they met still other people who said, “Such a cruel couple! They are both riding on that poor buffalo. How mindless and cruel they are.” Śiva said, “Okay, good point.” He got off the buffalo and let his wife continue riding it. Then, they met people who said, “What a cruel wife! Her husband is walking while she is riding on the buffalo.”

After all of this, Pārvatī said, “Now I give up! You cannot make all people happy. We tried riding, not riding, you riding, and me riding. And somebody was always unhappy. You cannot make this world a perfect world.” And with that, they went back to their heaven.

What I want to say is that we have to adjust ourselves according to the situation. This is based upon my own observation and my own understanding. It is my own personal opinion that I want to share with you, like everything that I have shared with you today. In general, when we have arguments—whether between husband and wife, or between parents and children, or in some other relationship—this happens because we are important to ourselves. We are selfish people. Furthermore,

we imagine we know the other person. The wife thinks, “My husband will do this, or want this, or be like this.” The husband thinks similarly about the wife. Parents think, “My children will behave in such-and-such a way, or they will do this or that.” All of these things are imagination. You are hoping that someone will do this or that, or say this or that. In all these cases, when the other person doesn’t say or do what agrees with what you imagined, you will feel disappointed. You will argue with them. But the problem is that the other person cannot see your mind, and you cannot see theirs. They do not know what was in your imagination or your expectation or your hope or doubt.

In families, and in society generally, these kinds of problems are very common. However, as I said, a perfect world does not exist, and so we have to adjust ourselves accordingly. We can adapt our behavior, the way that we say things, and so on. This is one way I think we can have a better life.

Certainly, it is a mistake to think that just by praying to Buddha or to Mañjuśrī, everything will happen by itself. It doesn’t work that way. Yes, you have to pray. You have to get inspired, read the instructions, and understand the path. And then, you must go yourself. When you do, you will encounter obstacles, or whatever you want to call them. You will have to try to get over these things. Just because you have begun following the

Buddha, it does not mean that nothing unpleasant will happen to you now.

In fact, for us as Buddhists, our suffering can become a sort of gift or precious thing. Without suffering, there is no Buddhism. Without the problems that we encounter, there would be no opportunity to apply the solution. In this way, our suffering becomes a very important tool for our practice. Of course, there are different methods for practicing, but there are some practitioners I know who are actually praying for suffering for themselves. Why do they do this? It is because when there is zero negativity [negative karma] and everything is 100% pure, this is when one attains enlightenment or becomes awakened. Everybody has accumulated negative deeds, and if we wish to reach zero, then the more suffering we have, the better. The only way to reduce the balance of our negative deeds is through their exhaustion. This is how the law of karma operates. So therefore, the more suffering we have, the more negative deeds from the past will be exhausted. Also, as this happens, we will have more opportunity to accumulate merit and to practice compassion, and so on.

If there is no pain or no suffering, then there is no chance to practice compassion. If there is nobody screaming or yelling at you, there is no chance to practice love or understanding

or patience towards them. I'm not saying that you should go looking for people who will scream at you. But, generally speaking, the more problems you have from the side of the other, the more opportunity you have for yourself, and from your side, to overcome these challenges and to practice the teaching.

It is important to understand that suffering is not all negative. Don't think like that. There are opportunities to accumulate merit all the time, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. Let's say that you are doing a retreat. Even then, it doesn't mean that you are engaged with others; it does not mean that you don't have the chance to accumulate merit that way. You can imagine or visualize that whatever you are doing—eating, sleeping, or anything else—is for the sake of others. You should think that you are dedicating these things towards the whole world. What we call “dedicating merit” is the same thing.

The initiation that I gave you today comes from the *Collection of Sadhanas*. I received this from His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin Rinpoche, and I'm happy that I could pass it down to you.

Now, we will do the dedication prayers.



- His Holiness the 43rd Sakya Trizin, Gyana Vajra Rinpoche, is the second son of His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (the 41st Sakya Trizin). He belongs to the noble Khön family, whose successive generations have provided an unbroken lineage of outstanding Buddhist masters.

At an early age, Rinpoche undertook his training in the principal rituals and prayers of the Sakya lineage. Rinpoche has received from His Holiness the Sakya Trichen most of the major initiations, empowerments, oral transmissions, blessings, and pith instructions that are inherent to the Sakya lineage. Furthermore, Rinpoche has received numerous common and uncommon teachings from some of the pre-eminent teachers of Tibetan Buddhism of our age.



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